

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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/065 W

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P 131305Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1150

INFO SECDEF WASHDC//ASD:ISA//

USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ//SC-O//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 3284

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH ARGENTINE MINISTER OF DEFENSE MARIO ADOLFO

SAVINO

1. (U) FOLLOWING SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION RECAPS MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE, GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA, 9 MAY 1975.

2. (C) AT 1100 HOURS, 9 MAY 1975, AMBASSADOR HILL, DCM MONTLLOR AND BGEN SALISBURY MET WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE SAVINO OF ARGENTINA. THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO INFORM THE MINISTER OF: (1) THE DRAWDOWN OF THE MILITARY GROUP FROM 20 TO 13 US PERSONNEL; (2) THE LIFTING OF THE SUSPENSION ON GRANT AID MAP TRAINING FUNDS UNDER SECTION 620(A)3 OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT; (3) THE POSSIBLE DOWNGRADING OF THE MILGP COMMANDER'S POSITION FROM THAT OF A GENERAL OFFICER TO AN O6; AND (4) TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE MINISTER'S INTEREST IN MAKING A VISIT TO DOD-WASHINGTON.

3. (C) THE MEETING OPENED WITH CORDIAL GREETINGS AND A PRESENTATION OF ERTS I SATELLITE PHOTOS OF ARGENTINA.

4. (C) AMBASSADOR HILL THEN BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF THE REDUCTION

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OF THE MILITARY GROUP AND EXPLAINED THAT THE REASON FOR THE REDUC-

TION WAS PURELY FOR SECURITY REASONS AND THAT IT IS TEMPORARY IN NATURE. THE MINISTER STATED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE AMBASSADOR'S POINT AND STRESSED HIS DESIRE FOR STRONG ARGENTINE-U.S. RELATIONSHIPS. HE SAID HE WOULD COOPERATE ON THIS MATTER AND, AS THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED, THERE WOULD BE NO PUBLICITY WHATSOEVER. THE AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH WE HAD WRITTEN AGREEMENTS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, HE WOULD PREFER THE MATTER BE HANDLED VERBALLY AND WITHOUT FORMAL PAPERWORK. THE MINISTER AGREED AND ADDED THAT THE NEWS MEDIA WAS VERY PENETRATING AND DAMAGING AT TIMES. AMBASSADOR HILL ASKED THE MINISTER FOR HIS RECOMMENDATION ON HOW THE CINCS OF THE ARGENTINE MILITARY SERVICES SHOULD BE NOTIFIED OF THE REDUCTION. THE MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO TELL GEN ANAYA, ADM MASSERA AND GEN FAUTARIO SOMETIME NEXT WEEK OF THIS DRAWDOWN. THE MINISTER ASKED WHEN THIS REDUCTION WOULD TAKE PLACE AND THE AMBASSADOR INFORMED HIM THAT IT WILL BE SOMETIME IN JULY. HE WAS INFORMED THAT SOME PERSONNEL WHO WERE LEAVING THE LATTER PART OF MAY AND EARLY JUNE DUE TO NORMAL ROTATION WOULD NOT BE REPLACED.

5. (C) THE MINISTER WAS INFORMED THAT THE DOD, IN ACTING UNDER PUBLIC LAW, WAS REDUCING THE GENERAL OFFICER SLOTS IN VARIOUS MAAGS/MILGPS WORLDWIDE AND THAT GEN SALISBURY'S POSITION WAS AMONG THOSE TO BE REDUCED. AMB HILL INFORMED THE MINISTER THAT ALTHOUGH THIS WAS BEING DIRECTED, HE HAD RECLAMAED THIS DECISION AND THAT HE WAS RECOMMENDING THE REDUCTION NOT BE MADE. THE MINISTER STATED THAT HE KNEW THE AMB WOULD DO EVERYTHING HE COULD.

6. (C) THE MINISTER WAS THEN INFORMED THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD LIFTED THE RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED UNDER SECTION 620 OF THE FAA AND THAT THE MAP TRAINING PROGRAM WOULD BE REINSTATED. HE WAS INFORMED THAT \$100,000 REMAINED IN THIS FISCAL YEAR WHICH COULD BE CARRIED OVER TO THE 5TH QTR; THAT THE VALUE FOR THE NEXT FY WAS \$800,000; AND THAT THERE WAS \$30M TO \$34 PROGRAMMED FOR FMS SALES AND CREDIT. THE MINISTER THANKED THE AMBASSADOR AND SAID THAT HE WANTED CLOSER TIES WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE MENTIONED ADMIRAL MASSERA'S RECENT VISIT TO THE U.S. AND THE COURTESIES AND FRIENDLINESS THAT HE RECEIVED DURING THE VISIT.

7. (D/NFD) THE AMB ASKED THE MINISTER HOW THE COUNTER-TERRORIST OPERATIONS WERE PROGRESSING. THE MINISTER GRAPHICALLY DESCRIBED

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THE ARMY'S OPERATIONS IN TUCUMAN PROVINCE AND HOW THE ERP WAS OPERATING. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE ERP WAS PAYING HIGH PRICES FOR FOOD STUFFS TO FARMERS AND PRODUCERS WHO HAD SET UP BRANCH OUTLETS ON THE MOUNTAIN SLOPES. HE STATED HIS BELIEF THAT THE MILITARY HAD ELIMINATED MOST OF THESE OUTLETS, AND THAT ERP HAD BEEN HURT AND NOW ONLY HAD ONE UNIT IN THE AREA OF APPROX 150 PERSONNEL AND A FEW CADRE. HE ADDED THAT MANY FOREIGN NATIONS WORKED FOR THE ERP -- URUGUAYANS, BOLIVIANS, PERUVIANS, CUBANS AND FRENCH --

INCLUDING A FRENCH LTCOL WHO WAS A VETERAN OF THE ALGERIAN WAR. THE URUGUAYANS, WHO WERE TRAINED IN ALGERIA, HAD ESTABLISHED A PLANT TO MANUFACTURE MACHINEGUNS. THE MINISTER STATED THAT HE FELT THE MILITARY HAD DONE A GREAT DEAL IN FERRETING OUT AND ELIMINATING THE ERP IN THAT AREA; HOWEVER, IT WILL TAKE CONSIDERABLE TIME TO WIN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THE INFLATED PRICES AND PROPAGANDA THE ERP HAD IMPOSED. HE ADDED THAT MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WERE

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 NSC-05

SS-15 ARAE-00 EB-07 SP-02 L-02 PRS-01 TRSE-00 EUR-12

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P R 131305Z MAY 75

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1151

INFO SECDEF WASHDC//ASD:ISA//

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 3284

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GIVING SUPPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE TERRORISTS BY PHONING IN INFORMATION AND REPORTING MOVEMENTS.

8. (C/NFD) THE MINISTER THEN DIGRESSED AND TALKED ABOUT THE WOMAN LAWYER FROM ROSARIO WHO WAS HIGH IN THE ERP HEIRARCHY. HE STATED THAT ALTHOUGH THE MILITARY HAD THE AUTHORITY TO PICK SOMEONE UP AND BRING THEM TO CUSTODY, ALL TOO OFTEN THE COURTS WOULD RELEASE THEM. HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS DEFINITE PROOF SHE WAS A MEMBER OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THE RP AND THAT SHE WAS PLACED IN JAIL UNDER THE TERMS OF THE STATE OF SEIGE, THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO RETAIN HER FOR ABOUT FIVE OR SIX MONTHS, HOPING IN THE MEANTIME TO OBTAIN INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE FOR A TRIAL.

9. (C/NFD) THE MINISTER THEN WENT ON TO DISCUSS A RECENT SOVIET OFFER OF 150 HELICOPTERS AT A VERY ATTRACTIVE PRICE AND WITH VERY LENIENT TERMS OF PAYMENT, I.E., OVER 20 YEARS AND THE COST PROBABLY WELL BELOW PRODUCTION COSTS. THESE HELICOPTERS WOULD HAVE BEEN PURCHASED THROUGH THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE, WHICH IS THE EXECUTIVE AGENCY FOR THE PURCHASE OF ALL COMMERCIAL-TYPE AIRCRAFT BELONGING TO ARGENTINA. THESE HELICOPTERS OFFERED BY THE RUSSIANS WOULD HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED
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THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCES FOR THE USE OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, POLICE AND GENERAL USE FOR NATION-BUILDING ACTIVITIES AND LAW AND ORDER. THE MINISTER SAID THAT THIS OFFER WAS MOST ATTRACTIVE, HOWEVER, HE WAS NOT PLEASED WITH THE STRINGS ATTACHED AND DID NOT WANT TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE SOVIET GAME. ON THE OFFER, HE HAD BRIGADIER FAUTARIO (CINC AAF) CONDUCT A STUDY ON THE SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HELICOPTERS. THE STUDY CONCLUDED THAT THERE WOULD BE A REQUIREMENT FOR APPROX 200 SOVIET OR SOVIET-TRAINED TECHNICIANS TO BE BROUGHT INTO ARGENTINA TO ASSIST IN MAINTENANCE/SUPPORT. ALTHOUGH THE OFFER FOR BADLY NEEDED HELICOPTERS APPEARED MOST ATTRACTIVE, HE BELIEVED IT WAS AN INVITATION FOR THE POSSIBLE INTRODUCTION OF SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS INTO ARGENTINA. THE MINISTER POINTED OUT THAT THE AAF HAS A GREAT NEED FOR ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS AND THAT HE WANTS TO FURTHER EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF HOW THEY COULD ACQUIRE THEM. HE SUDDENLY RECOLLECTED THAT LAST WINTER (I.E., FEBRUARY) WHEN THE US ICEBREAKER GLACIER AND THE ARGENTINE ICEBREAKER SAN MARTIN WERE STUCK IN THE ICE AND WERE IN TROUBLE IN THE WEDDELL SEA, THAT A SECOND ARGENTINE SHIP WITH A HELICOPTER ABOARD, WAS PROCEEDING TO GIVE SUPPORT. BUT IN THE ROUGH SEAS, IN THE ATTEMPT TO SUPPORT GLACIER AND SAN MARTIN, THE HELICOPTER ON THE SHIP WAS LOST OVERBOARD WHERE IT COULD NOT BE RECOVERED. HE STATED THAT ALL THINGS BEING CONSIDERED, THAT IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEIOUS AND A FEASIBLE GESTURE IF THE US WOULD SEE FIT TO REPLACE THIS HELICOPTER THAT WAS LOST DUE TO THE SHIP'S JOINT EFFORT TO COME TO THE ASSISTANCE OF THE ARGENTINE AND US ICEBREAKERS. THE MINISTER ASKED IF SOMETHING COULD BE WORKED OUT, BECAUSE THIS WAS NOT A MILITARY HELICOPTER; THAT ALTHOUGH IT WAS FLOWN BY A MILITARY CREW, IT WAS UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY WORKING IN THE ANTARCTIC. HE SAID THAT IF SUCH A REPLACEMENT COULD BE MADE, THAT HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE FOR THE CAPTAIN OF THE GLACIER, CAPTAIN GILLETTE, TO COME TO ARGENTINA FOR SUCH A CEREMONY AND THAT DUE COVERAGE WOULD BE GIVEN BY THE PRESS. (COMMENT: IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE INCIDENT THAT THE MINISTER WAS REFERRING TO WAS THE HELICOPTER LOST FROM THE BAHIA AGUIRRE IN DECEMBER WHEN IT WAS PROCEEDING TO HELP THE SAN MARTIN. LATER, IN FEBRUARY THE SAN MARTIN LOST A HELICOPTER). ONCE AGAIN, MINISTER SAVINO REITERATED THEIR NEED FOR ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS AND THE LACK OF FUNDS AT

THIS PARTICULAR TIME TO PURCHASE THEM.

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10. (C) AMB HILL ASKED THE MINISTER IF HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT THE DOD IN WASHINGTON. THE MINISTER STATED THAT HE THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE VERY BENEFICIAL AND TALKED FURTHER OF THE FINE VISIT THAT ADMIRAL MASSERA HAD HAD. HOWEVER, HE WAS VERY NON-COMMITTAL ON WHETHER OR NOT HE COULD ACCEPT AN INVITATION IF EXTENDED AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME. IT WAS THE BELIEF OF ALL THOSE PRESENT THAT HE WOULD REALLY LIKE TO GO TO THE US BUT HE VIEWS HIS POSITION AND SITUATION IN ARGENTINA AT THIS TIME SO DEMANDING THAT IT WOULD PRECLUDE SUCH A TRIP IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE MINISTER POINTED OUT THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP THAT THE ARGENTINE MILITARY HAS WITH THE US AND WAS HAPPY THAT THROUGH THESE CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS THEY WERE ABLE TO QUICKLY COUNTER FABRICATED STORIES THAT THE ERP AND MONTONEROS USE. THE MINISTER POINTED OUT THAT MANY OF THE NEWS ITEMS ON THE CIA THAT COME FROM THE US ARE PICKED UP AND PRINTED BY THE TERRORIST GROUPS AS WIRE CABLES AND AS THE GOSPEL TRUTH FROM THE US. HE STATED THAT ONE OF HIS BIGGEST JOBS WAS COUNTERING MISINFORMATION AND RUMORS THAT APPEAR IN THE PAPERS CONCERNING THE US AND ARGENTINE RELATIONSHIPS.

11. (C) IN REFERENCE TO THE AIR FORCE CADET EXCHANGE PROGRAM, THE AMB ASKED THE MINISTER WHETHER THE USAF CADETS' VISIT TO ARGENTINA WOULD BE FEASIBLE AT THIS TIME. THE MINISTER REPLIED THAT THE CADETS SHOULD MAKE THE VISIT AND SUGGESTED VISITS TO THE MAJOR AIR BASES IN ARGENTINA.

12. (C) IN SUMMARY, MINISTER SAVINO APPEARED TO BE VERY ALERT, ASTUTE, AND KNOWLEDGEABLE -- NOT ONLY OF THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AND POLITICAL SITUATION BUT THE OVERALL SITUATION AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME. HE SEEM ANXIOUS TO BE COOPERATIVE AND MORE THAN WILLING TO SEEK CLOSER TIES BETWEEN THE MILITARY OF THE US AND ARGENTINA. IN CLOSING, HE REITERATED THE ADVANTAGES THAT CAN BE GAINED BY CLOSER EXCHANGE AND RELATIONSHIPS.

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